

## Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



### Croft Middle School

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## Waste Reduction is a Part of Daily Life at Croft

### The Member

Croft Middle School, a Design Center for Global Environmental Awareness, opened in August 2003 on the Grassmere property that it shares with the Nashville Zoo. The Croft Program follows the standards of Metro Nashville Public Schools while incorporating the Global Environmental theme. Inscribed on the arch at the school's front entrance is a quotation by the African naturalist Baba Dioum that captures the essence of the vision for Croft Middle School:

"In the end, we will conserve only what we love;  
We will love only what we understand;  
We will understand only what we are taught."

### The Story

From the opening days of the school in 2003, Croft has been committed to waste reduction and recycling. The school was one of the first in Metro Nashville Public School system to receive a recycling dumpster. The cafeteria staff, custodians, students and faculty immediately began to fill their "Curby" dumpster with steel cans, boxes, and paper. The cafeteria uses washable trays and silverware, and an aluminum can recycle box is located next to the trashcans in the lunchroom.

Student initiative has taken the school's efforts even further. In the fall 2003 semester four 7th grade math classes (100 students), assisted by Metro Public Works Recycling Coordinators, conducted a cafeteria waste audit. In January 2004, 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes (250 students) began composting lunch waste (food, napkins, milk cartons), graphing the volume and the compost bin temperatures. In January 2004, a seventh grade class (25 students) initiated a classroom and office recycling program, making signs, setting up collection days, and weighing recyclables collected. These pilot projects, undertaken during the school's inaugural year, are now a regular part of the curriculum, meeting academic standards in math, science, social studies, and writing.

Roots & Shoots, the school's environmental club, has taken the recycling program to a new level by using cardboard boxes to make "one-sided paper" bins for each classroom in an effort to urge students and faculty to use both sides of a piece of paper before recycling it. A box for used printer cartridges is located in the front lobby. Parents can bring their cartridges to be refurbished and reused.

### The Success

Student Composting: Two Junior Master Composters from each class collected waste at tableside and composted it. Bagged leaves from around the school's neighborhood were used as daily cover. Finished compost is used in the student gardens.

Student Recycling: Seventh Grade students in Cougar Quest, a writing and issues class, started the school-wide recycling program. They obtained bins from Recycle! Nashville, re-used cardboard boxes for some bins, made signs for each bin indicating pickup days and classroom signs showing acceptable recyclables.

Students took responsibility for both programs, needing little adult supervision. Students learned to deal with unexpected situations, work on a set schedule, and collect data. The cafeteria organized their compostable food waste and recruited students to compost it. Steel cans and cardboard boxes were collected and placed in the recycling dumpster. The YMCA After-Care program at Croft began composting their snack waste and using the recycling bins. In its inaugural year, Croft Middle School has taken waste reduction measures that have impacted all areas of the school's culture – the classroom, the cafeteria, and the community. The school has developed a culture that values recycling. Most importantly, the various projects have impressed upon students, faculty, staff, and parents the importance of taking individual action. By integrating many of the activities into the curriculum, the school is well on the way to having a sustainable, meaningful waste reduction program.

### The Pollution Prevented

Student Composting: Students collected approximately 1-½ liters per class per day of tableside cafeteria waste. A student-developed outdoor compost demonstration site included: The Earth Machine (80 gallon capacity), Garden Gourmet (82 gallons), converted plastic trash can (32 gallons), wire composter (21 gallons), and loading pallet bin (479 gallons). All the compost bins were filled to capacity in one semester, totaling 694 gallons. Student Recycling: The students organized and implemented the recycling collection system, weighed each bin, and delivered materials to the recycle dumpster – over 1100 pounds were collected in the pilot project during the last 6 months of the 2003-04 school year.

March 2005